

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 063482

FOLLOWING REPEAT MEXICO 04061 SENT ACTION SECSTATE DEAHQS
INFO AL USCONS MEXICO MAR 10.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 04061

QEO: 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SNAR, MX
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - MEETING WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL ON
DEA PARTICIPATION IN GOM ERADICATION CAMPAIGN

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING IS A MEMCON OF A 75 MINUTE
MEETING AT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ON MARCH 8.
GOM PARTICIPANTS WERE ATTORNEY GENERAL OSCAR FLORES,
AND HIS EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FERNANDO BAEZA. USG PARTI-
CIPANTS WERE DEA ADMINISTRATOR PETER B. BENSINGER,
AMBASSADOR PATRICK J. LUCEY, DCM HERBERT B. THOMPSON,
NARCOTICS ATTACHE JACQUES I. KIERE AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT
JOSEPH D. MCLAUGHLIN. FLORES ARGUED, AND USG PARTICI-
PANTS ACCEPTED, THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PERMANENT PARTI-
CIPATION BY U. S. POLICE ENTITIES IN THE ERADICATION
CAMPAIGN. THIS MEMCON HAS BEEN CLEARED BY ALL USG
PARTICIPANTS EXCEPT THE DEA ADMINISTRATOR, WHO DEPARTED
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BEFORE IT WAS DRAFTED. END SUMMARY.

2. BENSINGER OPENED MEETING BY CONVEYING PERSONAL BEST
WISHES OF U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL AND EXPRESSING U.S.
APPRECIATION FOR SUCCESS OF GOM NARCOTICS EFFORT, NOTING
THAT U. S. HEROIN DEATHS HAVE FALLEN 50 PERCENT. FLORES
INQUIRED ABOUT HEROIN SITUATION IN GOLDEN TRIANGLE AND
CONVERSATION TURNED TO GENERAL DISCUSSION OF TRAFFICKING
PATTERNS, INCREASED PENALTIES OF TRAFFICKERS IN THE
U.S., AND USG-GOM LIAISON ON ENFORCEMENT CASES.

BENSINGER THEN INFORMED FLORES OF RECENT ARREST OF ANTHONY CRUZ VASQUEZ IN NEWARK AND SAID THAT EMBASSY WOULD SHORTLY TRANSMIT INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING THIS INVESTIGATION.

3. FLORES THEN TURNED TO RECENT COUNTRY-WIDE RECON-NAISSANCE SWEEP, WHICH HE SAID UTILIZED 20 AIRCRAFT FOR A PERIOD OF ONE MONTH. (FLORES GAVE BENSINGER COPY OF RECON RESULTS TO TAKE TO WASHINGTON AND PROMISED ADDITIONAL COPIES TO EMBASSY ASAP.) FLORES STATED THAT EMBASSY HAD ALREADY RECEIVED COPIES OF THE RAW DATA ON WHICH THE REPORT WAS BASED AND SAID THAT THE NUMBER OF POPPY CROPS IN SINALOA THIS YEAR IS LESS THAN 30 PERCENT OF WHAT WAS FOUND LAST YEAR AND THAT EVEN THESE FIELDS ARE MUCH SMALLER THAN LAST YEAR. HE SPECULATED THAT LESS MONEY IS AVAILABLE TO THE FARMERS BECAUSE CONSISTENT CROP FAILURES DUE TO ERADICATION PROGRAM HAVE MADE LOANS HARDER TO OBTAIN.

4. BENSINGER STATED THAT MEXICAN EFFORT IS CLEAR AND MEASURABLE, NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF ACTIVITY IN MEXICO BUT IN REDUCTION OF HEROIN PURITY IN THE U.S. FROM 6.6 TO 5.0 PERCENT AND IN THE DROP OF HEROIN INJURIES FROM
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5,000 PER QUARTER TO 2,500 PER QUARTER, WHICH HE TAKES AS INDICATION THAT ERADICATION IS WORKING. HE STATED THAT HIS PROBLEM WAS TO REASSURE CONGRESS THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE AND THAT IT WAS HELPFUL TO HAVE SOMEONE FROM DEA PRESENT IN THE VERIFICATION PROCESS.

5. FLORES SAID "WE ARE PARTNERS AND WITHOUT YOU WE CANNOT CONTINUE". HE SAID USG AND GOM MUST CONTINUE TO SHARE RESULTS BUT NOT THROUGH "POLICE" CHANNELS. THE USG, HE SAID, HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW EVERYTHING THROUGH THE AMBASSADOR BUT THAT MEXICO CANNOT BE WATCHED BY POLICE. FLORES ADDED THAT HE COULD NOT "FIGHT THE INFLUENCE OF EVERYONE ELSE" IN MEXICO IF IT BECAME KNOWN THAT FOREIGN POLICE WERE WATCHING.

6. FLORES THEN STATED THAT THE U.S. MUST PREPARE TO FIND WAYS TO COMBAT OPIUM PRODUCTION ELSEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA BECAUSE, AS THE MEXICAN PROGRAM IMPACTS ON PRODUCTION, TRAFFICKERS WILL MOVE ELSEWHERE. HE SAID THAT MEXICO IS PERCEIVED BY ITS NEIGHBORS TO THE SOUTH MUCH AS MEXICO PERCEIVES THE UNITED STATES, LIMITING MEXICO'S ABILITY TO WORK IN THESE COUNTRIES. HE THEREFORE PROPOSED THAT DEA SEND SOME PEOPLE (AT VARIOUS POINTS FLORES MENTIONED TWO, SIX, AND TEN INDIVIDUALS) TO SEE EVERYTHING MEXICO IS DOING AND BE IN A POSITION TO INITIATE ERADICATION PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE. MEXICO WOULD NOT, HE SAID, SEND ITS OWN PEOPLE TO OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUN-

TRIES BUT WOULD RECEIVE PEOPLE IF THEY WANT TO SEND THEM.

7. FLORES CONTINUED THAT ERADICATION "IS NOT A POLICE OPERATION BUT A POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC PROGRAM WITH POLICE RAMIFICATIONS". HE SAID THAT ON PURELY POLICE ACTIVITIES, DEA AND HIS OFFICE COOPERATED FULLY. BENSINGER NOTED THAT HE AND HIS PEOPLE "FEEL LIKE PARTNERS" AND THAT WE MUST LOOK FOR A WAY TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE THAT DEA PERSONNEL ARE "POLICEMEN COMING TO WATCH".

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8. FLORES THEN SAID THAT THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT IS WORKING ON ERADICATION FOR DOMESTIC, SOCIAL, AND HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND THAT IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT MEXICO IS PURSUING ERADICATION SOLELY TO PLEASE THE UNITED STATES. BENSINGER AGREED, BUT ADDED THAT HE HAS TESTIFIED TO CONGRESS ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS THAT MEXICO HAS DONE AND THAT THE SAME CONGRESSMEN, HAVING HEARD OF THE GOM REQUEST THAT DEA SPOTTERS LEAVE, ARE NOW ASKING HIM "WHAT'S HAPPENING?" FLORES SUGGESTED THAT HE RESPOND THAT IN THE BEGINNING DEA TRAINED THE MEXICANS BUT THAT NOW THE MEXICANS CAN DO IT ALONE.

9. AT THIS POINT BAEZA NOTED THAT ABOUT A YEAR AGO, THE MEXICANS THOUGHT THEY WERE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN INVENTORY CONTROL AND TOOK OVER THIS FUNCTION. RECENTLY, HE INFORMED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF REPORTS THAT THE WAREHOUSE WAS BEING MISMANAGED, AND FLORES IMMEDIATELY ORDERED A SAMPLE AUDIT WHICH REVEALED ERRORS OF AN UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL. FLORES THEN ORDERED HIM TO ASK THE EMBASSY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING. FLORES ADDED THAT THE GOM WOULD LIKEWISE SEEK USG ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF PERSONNEL FOR THE ADVANCED REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM, NOTING THAT "WHEN WE CANNOT DO SOMETHING, WE WILL NOT BE RELUCTANT TO ASK YOU TO TRAIN AND CHECK ON OUR PEOPLE".

10. BAEZA THEN STATED THAT THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAS 30,000 PEOPLE WORKING IN SOME ASPECT OF THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM, AND FLORES SAID THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE SECRETARY TO OBTAIN THESE PEOPLE. WITHOUT EXPLICITLY STATING SO, FLORES IMPLIED THAT THE DEA PARTICIPATION IN THE ERADICATION PROGRAM CREATED "MANY PROBLEMS" IN THIS REGARD. HE SAID HE AGREED COMPLETELY THAT SOMEWAY

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MUST BE FOUND TO PERMIT BOTH DEA AND THE GOM TO "SAVE FACE", ADDING THAT HE WANTED THE USG TO SEE AND HELP CORRECT GOM MISTAKES BUT NOT IN A POLICE CONTEXT. "WAR," HE SAID, "IS TOO IMPORTANT TO LEAVE TO GENERALS, AND THE

CAMPAIGN MUST BE HANDLED THROUGH THE AMBASSADOR AND THE MINISTER, NOT BY POLICE". AS FAR AS THE U.S. CONGRESS IS CONCERNED, THEY CAN SEE AND COMMENT ON ANYTHING FROM CENTRAL MANAGEMENT TO THE WAREHOUSES PROVIDED IT IS DONE "DECENTLY, CORRECTLY, AND RESPECTABLY". HE THEN CONTINUED BY SAYING, "IF WE ARE DOING WELL, LEAVE IT TO US POLITICIANS TO CONDUCT THE CAMPAIGN. AND WHEN YOU WANT TO CHECK, LET US KNOW AND WE WILL INVITE YOU".

11. BENSINGER EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND CONFIRMED THAT THE CAMPAIGN IS MOST IMPORTANT TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS REASSURED THAT HIS PEOPLE COULD CALL ON THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S PEOPLE IN THE FIELD FROM TIME TO TIME FOR DETAILS ON THE CAMPAIGN. FLORES COMMENTED THAT HE AND THE AMBASSADOR UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER WELL, AND THAT US-MEXICAN RELATIONS WERE NOW UPSET BY "OIL, GAS, AND -- OF ALL THINGS -- ONIONS". HE LOOKED AT BENSINGER AND SAID, "FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, DON'T LET US DOWN". HE REPEATED THAT HE CANNOT DO THE ERADICATION PROGRAM WITH POLICE, ALTHOUGH HE HAD INSTRUCTED THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL POLICE (FJP) TO EXTEND FULL COOPERATION ON POLICE MATTERS.

12. TURNING TO THE AMBASSADOR, FLORES STATED, "YOU HAVE THE ASSURANCES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO THAT WE WILL RECEIVE WITH PLEASURE ALL OF THE ADVICE, ASSISTANCE, AND INFORMATION YOU CARE TO OFFER. BUT LET US OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE POLICE AND LET POLICE WORK WITH POLICE". ELABORATING ON THIS THEME, HE SAID THAT MEXICANS HAVE SPANISH BLOOD AND A CERTAIN PRETENTIOUSNESS AND BECOME EDGY WHEN THEY ARE WATCHED
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BY POLICEMEN WHEN THEY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING. BETTER, HE SAID, TO LEAVE ERADICATION TO HIM AND THE AMBASSADOR TO WORK OUT, WITH HIS ASSURANCES THAT, "YOU WILL HAVE, EVERYDAY, INFORMATION ON EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE CAMPAIGN".

13. FLORES SAID HE AND HIS PEOPLE INTENDED TO DESTROY FULLY 90-95 PERCENT OF THE POPPY CROPS, AND WERE CONFIDENT OF DOING SO BECAUSE THEY HAD TAKEN THE DECISION TO SPRAY FIELDS WHEN LOCATED, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR STATE OF GROWTH. BENSINGER COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GOM'S EXTRAORDINARY COMMITMENT. BENSINGER THEN STATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT FLORES WAS SAYING AND AGREED THAT THE CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL. CONGRESSMEN, HOWEVER, STILL HAVE PROBLEMS WITH HIS REASSURANCES THAT THE CAMPAIGN IS PROCEEDING WELL WHEN THEIR CONSTITUENTS CONTINUE TO DIE OF HEROIN OVERDOSES. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THE ATTORNEY

GENERAL'S AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATION MIGHT BE A USEFUL TOOL TO EXPLAIN THE PROGRAM TO CONGRESSMEN. FLORES COMMENTED THAT HE WAS WILLING TO RECEIVE A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE "EVERY WEEK" IF NECESSARY AS HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT HE AND THE AMBASSADOR UNDERSTOOD THEIR CONCERNS AND COULD DEAL WITH THEM.

15. BENSINGER THEN AGREED THAT HE WOULD EXPLORE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SUGGESTION ON TRAINING DEA PEOPLE IN ERADICATION TECHNIQUES. FLORES ENCOURAGED HIM ON THIS POINT, NOTING THAT DEA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN WHICH IT WORKS COULD PROFIT FROM THE MISTAKES MEXICO HAS MADE AS IT LEARNED HOW TO ERADICATE ILLICIT CROPS.

16. MEETING CONCLUDED WITH FLORES AND BAEZA PRAISING CONFIDENTIAL

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HIGHLY THE ASSISTANCE GOM HAS RECEIVED FROM DEA IN DEVELOPING INFORMATION HANDLING AND PROCESSING SYSTEMS, IN ADDITION TO THE DAY-TO-DAY COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT. IN THIS REGARD, BENSINGER SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED AN INTENSIVE EFFORT TO LOCATE JAIME HERRERA, WHOM HE CALLED A SYMBOL OF THE "UNTOUCHABLE TRAFFICKER". FLORES TOLD BAEZA THAT FJP DIRECTOR GENERAL MENDIOLEA SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO PUT TWO MEN ON THIS CASE FULL TIME. LUCEY UNQUOTE VANCE

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